



The Weekly Page

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 4

FEBRUARY 6, 2009

Pages Learn About Legislature



Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

Bill writing is hard work



Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee

hearing on Thursday with their partners. Hard decisions had to be made about cutting services and/or raising taxes in the budget committees. Policy committee members had to think about enforcement, costs, and societal benefits vs. individual

rights when considering bills addressing social issues. Topics for these bills included the teaching of evolution and creationism, childhood obesity, uninsured children, and plastic bag pollution, among others.

Children's futures at stake

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Kelsi Nelson and Keenan Ordon-Bakalian introduced House Bill 2512, which addresses the issue of charging juveniles as adults. “The bill is a good one because it will protect children who commit adult crimes from the terrible ordeal of serving their sentences with hardened adult criminals,” said Rep. Nelson. On June 9, 2004, an immature 12-year-old was arrested for killing a the previous February. Although he had an IQ of 83 and had a learning disability so severe that he spelled “people” as “pepell,” he was brought before the court and tried as an adult. In the U.S. about 25,000 children a year have cases like this one sent to adult courts instead of being tried in juvenile court. “This is an abomination,” said Rep. Ordon-Bakalian. “Children should not be tried as adults and sent to adult prisons for crimes they committed as naive children.”





Senate bill to restrict abortions

Olympia – Senate Bill 7982 was introduced yesterday by Senator Graham Brooks. “This bill addresses the issue of abortions and will help young women make informed decisions,” said Sen. Brooks. In 2008, 17 out of 1,000 young women had abortions without telling their legal guardians. Because there are so few restrictions, it makes it quite simple for the partner of the young woman to force her into having an abortion. In addition, the young person will be more likely to make an uninformed decision when being pressured into an abortion. If this bill becomes law, it will be mandatory for the parent, guardian or mentor of the young woman to sign for and be present at the procedure. All abortion clinics must show records of the people who have abortions at their clinics.

The tax man cometh

Olympia—Facing a \$5-6 billion deficit in the operation budget, a delegation of senators testified at a Ways and Means hearing yesterday that the only way to get out of our financial mess is to raise taxes. Senators Alayna Tuohy, Kaysee-Li Tomkins, Madeleine Davis, Masen McCormick, and Jordan Jines advocated raising millions through a 50 cent increase in the cigarette tax, a five cent tax on soft drinks, a \$1 per liter tax on alcohol, and an extension of sales tax on golf and bowling lessons and haircuts and beauty services. “These items will bring in \$640 million for the state,” said Sen. Tuohy. A tax that has not been a popular one in the past, the income tax, was proposed by Sen. Jines, who rationalized, “Taxing everyone at only one percent of their income would bring in \$2.4 billion and would be fair.” He also proposed bumping the sales tax from 6.5 percent to 6.6, raising another \$200 million. “Nobody wants to raise taxes,” said Sen. Tomkins, “but these are trying times and we’ve all got to suffer for a few years in order to put an end to this crisis.”

Gang violence addressed in capitol

Olympia—Yesterday, Representative Dakota Mello introduced House Bill 2522, which addresses the issue of gang violence. “The bill is a good one because it will help get young people

out of gangs and reduce the amount of violence in our communities,” said Rep. Mello. The new law would establish more police patrols scoping out gang activity in cities and will open phone lines to help youth escape gang violence and teach them ways to stay away from it.



New teaching standards for evolution proposed

Olympia – Senate Bill 5678 was introduced yesterday by Senator Abigale Adams. “This bill addresses the issue of teaching evolution and will now require educators to include other comparable theories in science classes,” said Sen. Adams. According to the senator, some science teachers explain evolution as a fact, rather than a theory, which confuses students who have a traditional religious background. If this bill becomes law, schools must teach evolution, including all evidence both for and against the theory, and include other theories such as Intelligent Design. This bill came about after several students complained that the way evolution was taught threatened their personal beliefs.



Ocean pollution addressed by state rep

Olympia – House Bill 1001 was introduced yesterday by Representative Allie Tissot. “This bill addresses the issue of ocean pollution and will help reverse the acidity of the oceans,” said Rep. Tissot. Scientists say the oceans are becoming more and more acidic every day, which could greatly hurt humanity and all sea life. Acids will eventually eat away at the shells of crustaceans, eventually killing them. This could be a substantially large problem, since 500 million to 1 billion people depend upon seafood worldwide. Through this legislation, the state will require carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emitting companies to pay a large tax for their pollution in an effort to force them to cut their production of harmful toxins.



All children to receive healthcare

Olympia – House Bill 2468 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Tamara Bellisle and Felecia Vadset. “This bill addresses the issue of uninsured children and will provide children 18 and younger will good healthcare,” said Rep. Bellisle. Currently 4 million infants are born a year and 28,000 die before their first birthday. In Washington State, 73,000 children do not have health insurance. This bill will provide health insurance for every child up to the age of 18. “In the long run there will be fewer health risks with these newly insured children because they will be getting the medical attention they need,” said Rep. Vadset.



Reps advocate cuts to state services

Olympia—Four minority representatives presented their suggestions to the House Ways and Means Committee yesterday in an attempt to stabilize the increasing budget deficit. Representatives Katie Von Rotz, Matthew Macy, Shelby Payne, and Sara Geiger suggested cuts in existing services the state provides. Rep. Geiger rationalized that letting 1,200 low-risk offenders go from jail and cutting the capitol tour program could save \$6.5 million. “Low-risk offenders do not generally recommit crimes and would not be a threat to society,” said Rep. Geiger. Rep. Macy concurred that the campus tours are not a necessity



and could save \$616,000. Closing the state film office was also seen as a frill that was unnecessary. “Washington doesn’t need film producers from

Hollywood to help our economy,” said Rep. Von Rotz. A suggestion that would not sit well with her educational constituents but which was seen as a measure that didn’t really impact the classroom enough to continue funding was reduction in class size. “It will provide another \$140 million if we don’t reduce class size. The money really only cuts about one student from each teacher’s class, anyway, which doesn’t help the teacher much,” said Rep. Payne.

Death from diseases no more!

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Arlen Hughes and Josh Cook introduced House Bill 2811, which addresses the issue of vacci-

nations of children. “The bill is a good one because it helps prevent deaths from childhood diseases,” said Sen. Hughes. The bill will require all parents to vaccinate their children and will not waive any vaccinations for children in public schools. “Washington has one of the highest contagion rates in the country for vaccine-preventable diseases,” said Sen. Cook.

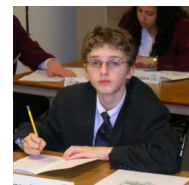
Senate tries to balance budget with cuts

Olympia—Yesterday Senators Nathan Anderson, Ian Clemens, Conor O’Neill, and Catherine Dossett met with the Senate Ways and Means Committee to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium. “There just doesn’t seem to be any way around making some big cuts,” said Sen. Clemens. Suggestions included cutting spending on goods and services by 25 percent. “There is a lot of waste that we could be avoiding and this just might get us to conserve more,” said Sen. O’Neill. Education took some hits in the committee hearing, as well. The group recommended suspending money for class size reductions, saving the state \$140 million. “The amount of money would only reduce class size by about one student per class, which really wouldn’t impact the teacher workload much,” said Sen. Anderson. Teacher raises may also have to be postponed for the next biennium, according to Sen. Dossett. Rationalizing that teachers already have a pretty good salary, Sen. Dossett felt they could easily live with what they already have. “Unfortunately, there is no easy fix for this situation,” said Sen. Anderson. “Everyone is going to have to tighten his belt and make sacrifices.”



Sattgast strikes out at cigarette smoke

Olympia – House Bill 2000 was introduced yesterday by Representative Jason Sattgast. “This bill addresses the issue of cigarette related deaths and will require cigarette companies that sell cigarettes in Washington to reduce the amount of nicotine in their products,” said Rep. Sattgast. The bill takes drastic measures for what Rep. Sattgast feels is a drastic problem. Five million people die each year from first and second-hand smoke. Rep. Sattgast pointed out a new study that shows that even “third-hand” smoke, particles that linger in upholstery or clothing can cause serious health problems, as well.



Guest speakers visit Page School



Senator Joe Zarelli (R-18th), Secretary of State Sam Reed, Director of Ecology Jay Manning, Senate Civic Education Assistant Becca Kenna-Schenk, and Senate Intern Program assistant Heidi Laursen joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and

shared insightful information about their jobs. The class found out about the new Heritage Center being planned by the state, the 50-gallon oil spill on Puget Sound that occurred on Tuesday night, and the college intern program sponsored by the legislature. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker's questions.

Senators scare senior citizens

Olympia – Senate Bill 6782 was introduced yesterday by Senators Liz D'Amlieo and Kennan Mighell. "This bill addresses the issue of elder drivers and will prevent these dangerous motorists from endangering others," said Sen. D'Amlieo. "People over 65 have been found much more dangerous than all other age groups except teenagers," said Sen. Mighell.

Bagging dilemma

Olympia – House Bill 1313 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Mckenzie Phillips and Hunter Coulombe. "This bill addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution and will tax disposable plastic and paper bags," said Rep. Phillips. "We found that 100 billion plastic bags are used per year in America, and that it takes 1,000 years for each one to decompose. So, if the bags are taxed, then the government gains a great fund and, perhaps, citizens will become more cautious about our environment," said Rep. Coulombe.

Homelessness gets cleaned up

Olympia – House Bill 3254 was introduced yesterday by Representative Megan Cote. "This bill addresses the issue of home-

lessness and will supply homeless people with jobs that will allow them to turn their lives around," said Rep. Cote. Many Washington families are homeless and a growing number of people are living in their cars. If this bill is passed the government will supply homeless people with jobs that benefit the entire community with the intention of helping them make a better life for themselves and their families. These jobs would consist of cleaning up government-owned property as well as other unskilled jobs that are under the jurisdiction of the Washington State government.



Solution to child obesity offered

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Liandra Lucero and Paige Hollinger-Lant introduced Senate Bill 5656, which addresses the issue of child obesity. "The bill is a good one because it will reduce the number of kids becoming obese and getting type two diabetes and other health problems," said Sen. Lucero. If this bill becomes law, all parents, especially new parents, must watch



short videos teaching them what foods are good for their children and how to prevent their children from becoming obese. The law is mainly to encourage parents to teach their children to eat right so that they can avoid any health problems in the future.

Mock committees debate bills, vote

Simulated committee hearings were held on Thursday. Pages read their bills and "committee members," governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A "DO PASS" or "DO NOT PASS" recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.



Serious fiscal crisis may result in new taxes in the House of Representatives

Olympia—Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representatives Tiffany Kuan, Evan Repplier, Tyler Foth, Buddie Petrey, David Darms, Chris Anderson, and Michael Rhodes regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst we’ve seen in decades and the only way to solve our money problems is to tax goods,” said Rep. Anderson. Among the list of products to tax were cigarettes, soft



drinks, liquor, haircuts and beauty services, and bowling and golf lessons. “I don’t like what we have had to propose,” said Rep. Repplier, “but we simply have to bite the bullet.” Although many legislators had made campaign promises to forgo raising taxes,

Rep. Anderson and Foth were two who did not. “We knew we couldn’t balance the budget with simple cuts. It is just too big of a deficit,” said Rep. Foth. Both representatives recommend a temporary raise in the sales tax. A .5 percent tax would raise \$999 million and a one percent additional bump would raise \$2 billion. A more unpopular tax suggestion, the personal income tax, was made by Rep. Petrey and Rep. Kuan. “The controversial tax is actually both incredibly more fair among the different socioeconomic classes, but also saves more money for the state consumer in comparison to a sales tax,” said Rep. Kuan. “I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now,” said Rep. Petrey.

Evolution vs. Creationism in public schools

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Laura Griffith and Jillian Aasen introduced Senate Bill 7981, which addresses the issue of the teaching of evolution in schools. “The bill is a good one because it will stop the teaching of evolution as fact, teach kids more than one theory of how life came of be, and encourage our kids to look at an issue from all an-



gles instead of just one,” said Sen. Aasen. If passed, the bill will require public school teachers in the state of Washington to teach both evolution and creationism as equally credible theories for the origin of life and the universe. “Children and teens are intelligent enough to decide for themselves between the different theories,” Sen. Griffith stated. “No belief should be forced on them.”



Teachers passionate about civic education

The Washington State Legislature’s 2009 Page School employs teachers Judi Orr, a certificated teacher, and Matt Kreiling, former Legislative intern and lobbyist. Judi is a retired social studies and English

teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clover Park School District, and Matt lobbied for the Washington Student Lobby representing college students



throughout Washington. “I really enjoy facilitating learning and watching those light bulbs go off each week,” said Matt, as he introduced himself on Monday. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching them more about how state government functions. “I’d be a committee ‘junkie’ if I wasn’t teaching each day. Watching citizens testify about various issues alongside experts in the field is just fascinating to me,” said Judi.

Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional..



Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at:
[www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/
PageSchool/](http://www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/). This newsletter has been posted there.

